70

RARE AMERICAN BOOKS.

The History of Printing on This Side of the Atlantic—Some Curious Works.

A plain sign hanging over the entrance to a narrow stairway on Nassau street reads: "Rare American Books." A long, narrow room in the rear of the second story of the building contains the stock to which the sign refers. When asked yesterday by a reporter for *The Mail and Express* when book-printing was first done on the American continent, the proprietor of this book-store said:

"Printing on this side of the Atlantic was first done in Mexico in 1536. The earliest American book extant is dated 1539. It is a doctrine of faith of the Roman Catholic church, entitled 'Doctrina Christiana,' and was printed in Mexico in the Spanish language. Another book to be numbered among the oldest printed in America is a Mexican vocabulary, a dictionary of native Spanish and Mexican. It was printed in 1571.

"In the United States the first printing done was in 1639. In this year Freeman's "Oath" and "Almanac" were printed in Cambridge, Mass., the "oath" being printed on one side of a half sheet of foolscap. Neither of them is extant. The earliest printed book now in existence of those printed in this country is the book of Psalms, which was published in Cambridge in 1640. The next place where printing was done was in Boston. We have here in stock a book printed in Cambridge in 1671, and it is one of the oldest we ever had."

The speaker then showed the reporter a small and very ancient looking brown-paper pamphlet of thirty-four pages It was partly torn and had evidently seen hard usage. It was an election sermon preached at Boston on May 15, 1667, on election day, by Rev. Jonathan Mitchel, "late pastor of the Church of Christ, Cambridge." Its title was "Nehemiah on the Wall in Troublesome Times." Another curiosity which was shown was a text-book used in Harvard college in 1758. It was printed in Boston by John Draper. It was a text-book of logic, and was printed in Latin. Its title was "Compendium Logicæ Secundum Principia, D. Renati Cartefit et Catechistice Propofitum."

A rare book also found here relating to this city was in the Dutch language, printed in Holland in 1667. Two volumes in vellum were bound in one, and its price was $20. "This book," said the proprieter, "is said to contain the first printed report of the capture of New Netherland by the English in 1664. It is considered the most complete and authentic account in existence of the war between Holland and England, and includes a list of vessels and goods captured by the English from the Dutch.

A curious volume in the stock was a selection of handbills circulated in this city just previous to the general state election in 1810. "It is an amusing gubernatorial campaign document," said the owner, "appearing mainly to Methodist and somwhat to the Baptists. Jonas Platt was the federalist candidate and Daniel D. Tompkins the republican. Brother Elias Vanderlip and Samuel Winton, of the Methodist church, were their respective champions in this rather acrimonious controversy. Each assumes high moral grounds, and each deprecates the bringing of politics inside the church, and of course denounces the other for doing it. Neither claims his candidate as a communicant, or even as an attendant of the Methodist church, but seems to consider him a good enough Christian until after election.

An interesting volume seen was written by Cadwallader D. Colden printed in 1825. It was of half-morocco binding with gilt top, and is held at $13. It is a "Memoir, Prepared at the Request of a Committee of the Common Council of the City of New York at the Celebration of the Completion of the New York Canals." Many maps, views, and portraits are included in the volume. Another interesting book is a collection of the laws of the legislature of this state, "in force against loyalists and affecting trade of Great Britain and British merchants and others having property in that state." It was printed in London in 1786 and is held at $10. It contains the confiscation act and gives the names of many of the old residents who were known as tories.

An odd book relating to the politics of this city was the "Report of the Controller of Persons in Employ of Corporations and their Salaries." It contains 140 pages, and printed in 1838. "That book contains the names of the whole gang," said the proprietor, "with the amount of composition opposite the names. Why, Aaron Clark got $3,000 for being mayor, 'Old Hayes' got $500, and Ira Tooker and his compeers, who perhaps could not control more than two or three votes each, got 50 cents per night as watchmen."

"Can you tell me something about the celebrated Indian bible translated by John Elliot?" asked the reporter.

"Yes, sir, I can, and its history is one of great interest among all who are in our line of business. There are believed to be twenty or thirty copies in existence, and I have seen one of them sold for $1,000. There are very few perfect copies extant, and there are no reprints because even the Indian tribe for which it was printed has become a thing of the past. I have taken great interest in tracing one copy of the Indian bible and I think it has been sold fully twenty times, bringing hundreds of dollars. It is an unusually perfect copy, the printing being remarkably clear. Its history is this: It was printed in 1661 and 1663, the New Testament in the former year and the Old Testament later. Then the two parts were bound together. It was printed at Cambridge, and the first trace I have of it was when it came into the possession of Mr. John A. Rice, of Chicago, a collector, who paid $1,130 for it. He bought it at the Bunce sale in this city in 1868. When the Rice collection was sold, in 1870, it was bought by William Mezies, of this city, for $1,050. This gentleman paid $100 for having the book elegantly rebound. In 1876 it was sold to Mr. Joseph J. Cook, of Providence, for $900, and upon his death it was bought by Mr. Brayton Ives, of this city, for over $1,200. This gentleman now holds the precious volume. My assistant here owns a copy of the Indian bible of a later edition; though it is imperfect it is worth $200.—*New York Mail and Express.*

Garfield's Maiden Speech.

Gen. Garfield made his maiden speech in the house of representatives on the 28th of January, 1864, in reply to Mr. Finch, a democrat from Ohio. He advocated the confiscation of the large landed estates at the south, and spoke with such vehemence and profuse gesticulation that he exhibited signs of physical exhaustion before the expiration of his hour. "If," said he, "we want a lasting peace, we must put down the guilty cause, slavery, and take away the platform on which slavery stands—namely, the landed estates of the rebels of the south. The negro has been our true friend on every occasion." There was scarcely a surprise or battle where the negro had not come to us and told the truth. He had found that while the rebels were fighting, black men were cultivating their lands, the products of which were placed in the rebel commissary department. And it was not until we took away the main support of the rebels that we could conquer. If this was an abolition war it was because we have an abolition army; and he would tell gentlemen that slavery was dead forever, unless the body-snatchers of the other side should resurrect it and bring it into life. He said, "I announce, gentlemen, your friend has departed. Hang your emblems of mourning on the bier, and follow the hearse and shed tears over the grave; but I have no time to waste to hear eulogies on the deceased."—*Ben: Perley Poore.*

A Newspaper Without an Editor.

A newspaper in Madrid, called the *Correspondencia*, is peculiar in its way. It has the largest circulation of any paper in the capital, reaching 200,000 to 300,000 a day. It has no editor, but a dozen wide-awake reporters, who scour the town for every kind of information. They come to the office and drop their manuscripts in a bag, and there they stay until the foreman wants copy. Everything is then thrown into the forms without regard to order or anything else, and the paper is read from end to end in spite of the fact.—*St. Louis Globe-Democrat.*

BURIED BY FALLING COAL.

An Incident of the First Mine Disaster in America.

The fall of the roof of the coal mine at Raven Run and imprisonment of the ten miners underground, recalls to a survivor of the first great mine disaster in this country, a most marvelous escape of some of the miners who were imprisoned behind a wall of fallen coal a mile thick at the time of that disaster. The mine, writs a Honesdale, Pa., correspondent to *The New York Times*, was one of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company's miners at Carbondale. For several days in the winter of 1844 it had been giving warning to the miners by what is known among them as "working"—ominous crackings of the roof here and there through the mine—that they were laboring in constant danger, but with the proverbial recklessness of their class they continued to work. Suddenly, while nearly one hundred miners were below, and most of them working in the distant galleries, an immense area of the mine roof fell.

The superintendent of the mine was a Scotchman named Alexander Bryden, and he had a son among the laborers below. Bryden was at the top when the fall occurred, and he rushed at once into the mine to see if it were possible to rescue any of the workmen. Before he reached the fallen mass of coal he met several miners who had in some way escaped being crushed by the roof. They told Bryden that it was not possible that any of the other miners could be alive. He insisted on making an effort to work a passage through the wall in the hope that some of the men might be alive behind it and could be rescued, and the miners he had met on their way out of the pit, where top coal was still falling on every side, refusing to aid him, the superintendent went on alone. His lamp threw but a dim light on the scene, but he found a small opening made by the tops of two large slabs of coal having struck together, with their bases on the bottom of the mine three feet apart. Into this crevice Bryden crawled, and found the opening continued in a devious course into the depths. It grew so narrow and low that he was compelled to lie flat and drag himself along. Now and then he found it necessary to remove with his pick an obstructing lump of coal, and knew that by so doing he might remove a support to the mass above that would bring it down upon him and crush him to death. In that way he worked himself for a mile through the wall, and then found himself at the end of the choked chamber, where he emerged from the passage into a small open space. He was greeted by a shout that told him some of the imprisoned miners were still alive. The fall had extinguished every light, and they had failed to find any opening in the wall that lay between them and the mouth of the mine. Among the miners was Bryden's son. The superintendent quickly told the men what they must undergo in order to escape. One of their number had been crushed by the fall, and lay moaning with both arms and legs broken. Bryden took this man on his back, and, creeping with him back through the opening, told the others to follow. Twelve of the men were able to keep strength enough to reach the opening on the other side of the mine without aid, but eight of them it was necessary for the others to drag along over the jagged floor and sharp edges of the passage. The ominous cracking could be heard at short intervals coming from different parts of the mine, and everyone of the miners toiling through the narrow and crooked crevice in the wall expected every moment to be crushed by the settling of the mass of coal. They were all saved, however, and the writer's informant, now an aged resident of the county, is the last survivor of the party, the brave Bryden having only recently died. The old miner referred to had two sons in another part of the mine who were among the victims of the disaster.

Among those who were in the mine at the time of the fall of the roof was Asst. Supt. Hosie. Two days and nights after he crawled from the mouth of the pit. He was Haggard and bleeding, and his fingers were worn to the bone. He dropped unconscious at the mouth, and it was hours before he could give any account of his experiences in the mine. He had been surrounded by falling coal, and when the mass had settled he found himself without light or implement of any kind. After groping about in the space in which he was imprisoned he found a small aperture in the wall and he crawled into it. From that time he dragged himself through places which were barely large enough to admit his body, sometimes being forced to dig away obstructions with his hands, never once thinking of sleeping, choked by thirst, and not even cheered by a knowledge of the direction he was going, until, after forty-eight hours of constant and disheartening toil, he emerged from the prison wall and knew that he was in the tunnel leading out of the mine. Hosie survived his terrible experience until a year or so ago, and his two days' and nights' struggle for life in the choked-up mine is referred to as having no parallel in the history of coal-mining in this country.

In removing the fallen mass of coal the discovery was made that but few of the miners who were victims of the disaster had been killed outright. Groups of workmen were found surrounded by unmistakable evidence that they had worked desperately with their picks in the hope that they might cut a way to liberty, but, without water or light, and with foul air following the tumbling roof, had at last succumbed to their fate. One poor fellow was found alone, held fast to his waist in a mass of coal. He had worked with his pick-ax until he died with the tool clutched in his hands. Mine rats had eaten the flesh almost entirely from his body. Years afterward skeletons of other victims were occasionally found beneath the coal.

Komaroff's Career.

Those who remember Gen. Komaroff in St. Petersburg fifteen years ago as the military critic of the *Petersburgskiya Vedomosti* could hardly have foreseen that the quiet little dark-haired man who seemed to have got "army reorganization" upon the brain would ever become famous throughout the whole civilized world. His name of "Komaroff" (son of a misquito) is ominously suggestive of very great mischief done by very small means. It is possible that—like Prince Sachakoffskoi at Plevna in 1877—he may have exceeded his instructions in the hope of winning for himself, and making his success atone for his rashness. But in Russia it is always hazardous to conjecture from a man's public acts what his secret orders may have been, and even should the Russian government recall Komaroff in accordance with the demands of England, its disavowal of his dash upon Penjdeh will be no proof whatever that that movement was not made under the direct inspiration of the St. Petersburg war office.—*New York World.*

The Party.

"I attended a swell party last night," says Dr. Funnytonic to his friend Steadyboy.

"I didn't know you were a society man," answered Steadyboy.

"Well, as a general thing, I am not. But, you see, the party I attended had the mumps, and I couldn't well refuse. It was a very swell affair, I assure you."

When Dr. Funnytonic crawls from beneath the wreck of matter and crash of worlds which ensues he goes away muttering, "Well, all's swell that ends swell."

But it is to be observed that he does not speak up big and strong any more, and that he furtively scans the landscape as one who lives in momentary expectation of the downward engulphing swoop of some bold, black shadow of impending doom.—*Washington Hatchet*

Masonic Charity.

During the eleven years in which the prince of Wales has been at the head of the Free Masons in England that craft has contributed $17,500,000 to the three Masonic charitable institutions in London.—*London Letter.*

What is the difference—all right; you can leave the room if you don't want to hear it—What is the difference between a pickpocket who steals a watch and a girl who elopes with an Irishman? He makes off with a tick and she takes off with a mick.—*Washington Hatchet.*

A dentist is no chicken. He is always a pu l-it.—*Boston Globe.*